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NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20591

NOV 25 1968

A-68-32

Mr. David D. Thomas
Acting Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Department of Transportation
Washington, D. C. 20590

Dear Mr. Thomas:

On September 30, 1967, a Cessna 320A, N3016R, being operated by Lynch Flying Service, Inc., Billings, Montana, on a night IFR scheduled air taxi mail flight, experienced a fuel pressure drop to almost zero on the left engine, five minutes prior to arrival at Missoula, Montana Municipal Airport. The engine continued to operate satisfactorily and a normal approach and landing was made. After landing, the left engine quit and a fire was observed in the engine cowl area. The fire was extinguished at the ramp and investigation determined that the fire resulted from a break in the asbestos-sheathed flexible fuel line adjacent to the fuel exhaust manifold. The fuel line had been repaired before notification to the Board and for this reason the Board investigator was unable to determine the cause of the break.

While review of Board records fails to disclose cases of similar failure, there have been reported in the malfunction and defect reports two instances of Cessna 320 fuel hose deterioration and rupture due to proximity to hot exhaust system components. This condition appears to present a serious hazard and, therefore, we recommend that the Federal Aviation Administration conduct a directed safety investigation of all similar Cessna fuel line installations that are in proximity to hot exhaust system components and require that corrective measures be taken, where necessary, to preclude similar failures.

Please advise us of the results of the investigation. Personnel of our Bureau of Aviation Safety will be pleased to discuss the details of this recommendation.

Sincerely yours,

Original signed by

Joseph J. O'Connell, Jr.

Joseph J. O'Connell, Jr.
Chairman